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## Jack “Legs” Diamond

By Shannon Cuthbert

They called him “clay pigeon of the underworld,”  
a man they said would never die,  
in spite of the bullets they sunk in his skin.  
Bootlegger, skirt-chaser, murderer, traitor,  
he fled Manhattan for wide upstate skies  
where a man could see for miles and start anew,  
a trail of conned cops and double-crossed dames  
all left behind to seek their vain vengeance.  
And start he did, a vast business of booze,  
a network of moonshine smuggled by moonlight,  
silently finding its way to speakeasies—  
not always as silently as Legs hoped,  
though he was in the business of fixing that too,  
snuffing out lives like last night’s lanterns.  
All Legs, all strut, he was fire on the dance floor,  
cavorting at the Kenmore, at Catskill Mountain House,  
itself a doomed creature left to dim and decay,  
razed in ’63 to let wilderness in.  
Diamond was destined to shine too bright,  
shot in the dark in his bed on Dove Street,  
ghosts catching up under cover of night.  
He is nowhere and everywhere, an echo now,  
his name etched deep on the marbled mountains.  
Even now the Hudson, hungry for stories,  
carries whispers of his many crimes,  
dark tales that seep in the clay-soft soil,  
make silver minnows scatter like stones.

## Portal

By Shannon Cuthbert

The man drove us up to his aunt’s old place,  
a tumbling-down house in Cairo, New York.  
The house on its haunches lay curled like a question,  
with trees blowing smoke on either side.  
It seemed to me a ghost of its own,  
though the man assured us there were more within.  
We walked past a shed hung with dull-eyed deer,  
past bikes whose wheels were tongue-tied with weeds,  
churning up white moths like sparks of flame,  
til we came to the door, its maw yawning wide,  
its gap-toothed blackness beckoning us in.  
I turned around once before I went through,  
and watched a white moth taking flight,  
its powdered wings seizing my cool, dark heart.

A native of New Jersey, who grew up spending many summers with family in upstate New York, Shannon Cuthbert is a freelance writer who holds a BA in Creative Writing and Psychology from Hamilton College. She is a long-time lover of fairy tales, folklore, and local legends, with a particular interest in New York State and Irish folklore. She currently lives in Brooklyn and frequently spends time in the Catskills to be surrounded by their beauty.



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